

**BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
FINAL SITE AND BUILDING PLANS
New York and Florida Avenues, NE
Washington, D.C.**

Submission by the General Services Administration

October 3, 2002

Commission Action Requested

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted final site and building plans for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms National Headquarters Building at New York and Florida Avenues, NE, Washington, D.C., pursuant to D.C. Code, sec. 5-42, and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of 1952, as amended (40 U.S.C. 71d).

Commission Action

The Commission:

- Approves the final site and building plans for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms National Headquarters Building, Square 710, New York and Florida Avenues, NE, Washington, D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 42.00(38.00)-41071, with the exception of:
 - Final design of the garden wall, fence railing, and entry gates.
 - Design of the "public zone" at the intersection of 2nd and N Streets, including the major public amenity (sculpture).
 - Design of the three bays of blank wall at the 2nd and N Street intersection.

- Requires that GSA provide further design refinements to the excepted elements.
- Delegates to the Executive Director approval of refinements to the excepted elements.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

**BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

Square 710, New York and Florida Avenues, NE
Washington, D.C.

Report to the General Services Administration

October 3, 2002

Abstract

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted a request for approval of final site and building plans for a new headquarters office building for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) located on Square 710, Lots 800 and 801, in Northeast Washington, D.C. The building will be developed on this 6.14-acre site, located at the New York Avenue gateway to the downtown. The new headquarters facility will result in approximately 350,000 square feet devoted to offices, workshops, and support services. The facility will contain approximately 1,100 employees for ATF's national operations that include law enforcement, regulatory training, information technology, and community outreach functions.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site and building plans pursuant to D.C. Code, sec. 5-432, and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of 1952, as amended (40 U.S.C. 71d).

Commission Action

The Commission:

Approves the final site and building plans for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms national headquarters building, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 42.00(38.00) 41071, **with the exception of:**

- Final design of the garden wall, fence railing, and entry gates.
- Design of the "public zone" at the intersection of 2nd and N Streets, including the major public amenity (sculpture).
- Design of the three bays of blank wall at the 2nd and N Street intersection.

Requires that GSA provide further design refinements to the excepted elements.

Delegates to the Executive Director approval of refinements to the excepted elements.

* * *

BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

Site

The site for the new ATF national headquarters building is located on Square 710 (Lots 800 and 801) in Northeast Washington, D.C. The site is bordered by O Street and New York Avenue on the northwest, Florida Avenue on the northeast, 1st Street on the west, N Street on the south, and 2nd Street on the east. The site also includes half of the N and 2nd Street former rights-of-way.

Square 710 comprises approximately 5.2 acres. With recently closed street rights-of-way adding approximately .94 acres, the resulting total site area is 6.14 acres.

Building Program

The proposed new ATF headquarters facility will contain approximately 422,000 gross square feet of office space, housing approximately 1,100 employees, and will include 200 parking spaces.

Design Concept

The plan is composed of two building wings arranged in an L shape. A crescent-shaped building element is located just north of and within the L shape. A glazed atrium will connect these elements and provide daylight to the inner faces and central space adjoining the crescent and L wings. The principal entrance of the ATF complex is located on the southeast corner (2nd and N Streets) directly across from the proposed Metro station. There will also be a secondary entrance at the New York Avenue and Florida Avenue intersection.

A central feature of the design concept is the curved, arcaded three-story-high structure (the “garden wall”), which encloses a majority of the site. The purpose of this structure is to define both the street edge of the site and the large interior garden (approximately one acre). The wall itself provides additional physical and psychological security to the building.

The L-shaped building will be constructed using pre-cast concrete elements of a limestone color. The curved garden wall will have a smooth plaster finish and contain a grid of punched windows. The exterior façade of the curved building, facing the garden, is composed entirely of glass.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

At its December 14, 2000 meeting, the Commission authorized transmittal of comments to GSA and ATF on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for site acquisition for the new ATF headquarters.

At the June 7, 2001 meeting, the Commission reported to the Council of the District of Columbia that it favored the closure of the public alley within Square 710, but reported unfavorably on the proposal to close the 2nd Street right-of-way between Florida Avenue and N Street, NE and the block of N Street between 1st and 2nd Streets, NE.

At the September 6, 2001 meeting, the Commission approved the location and program for the ATF headquarters and urged GSA, through appropriate attention to all aspects of the project design, to prudently accommodate the program and fully resolve, to the satisfaction of the Commission, all negative impacts caused by the partial closing of the adjacent blocks of both 2nd and N Streets, NE.

At the December 6, 2001 meeting, the Commission approved the concept development plans for the new headquarters office building with the exception of the retail building component that extends into the former 2nd Street right-of-way. That portion of the proposal was inconsistent with the letter of August 30, 2001 from the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer to GSA confirming that “GSA has successfully avoided adverse effects on the city plan through commitment to a design that 1) avoids obstruction of the L’Enfant rights-of-way...” Additionally, the Commission requested that the preliminary site and building plan submission provide further clarification regarding (1) truck circulation, access, and operations, and (2) those areas of the site and building that would be accessible to the public at all times or on a limited basis in controlled situations. The Commission also highlighted its endorsement of pedestrian activity in the development area, including retail activity and a lively streetscape.

At the May 2, 2002 meeting, the Commission took the following actions:

- **Approved** the preliminary site and building plans for the new headquarters building with the exception of the fence shown at the exterior garden wall and with the condition that, prior to submission of final site and building plans, GSA restudy the design of the pedestrian perimeter to ensure security while projecting a public amenity, and not an image of fortification.
- **Required** GSA to re-design the streetscape on the north side of N Street in a manner that would incorporate smaller planters, benches and/or other street furniture that provides the necessary security and a pedestrian friendly environment.
- **Requested** that GSA consult further with the DC SHPO regarding the retail portion of the project, located in the 2nd Street right-of-way, so that the agreements made during the Section 106 review in 2001 can be confirmed or revised prior to submitting final site and building plans for Commission review.

- **Requested** that GSA continue to work with DCOP and NCPC to refine and/or reconsider the design of the vehicle entrance at the corner of 2nd and N Streets to make this area more pedestrian friendly and visually pleasant prior to submitting final site and building plans for Commission review.

CONSULTATION

Commission staff has continued to consult with the staffs of GSA, ATF, and the staffs of the following agencies of the District of Columbia government: the Office of Planning, including the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office; the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Office of the Surveyor.

EVALUATION

Commission staff met with ATF and GSA prior to the submission of its current request for final site and building plan approval, as well as on several occasions thereafter. ATF provided clarification of the design of the perimeter vehicle and pedestrian barriers; the building entrance at New York Avenue; the re-design of the north side of N Street; the design of streetscape elements on New York Avenue and O Street; and the design of the building entrance at the corner of 2nd and N Streets. The meetings led to the following revisions to GSA's proposal.

New York Avenue and O Street

GSA, ATF and NCPC agreed to the following components of the final site and building plans:

- The design of the park-like zone—incorporating trees, seating, and related landscaping—complies with the Commission's requirement to provide a public amenity in this area and helps to soften the wall. The provision of a public amenity is consistent with the initial overall objectives of NCPC and DCOP in the planning and design of this project.
- The garden wall—a one-meter-high wall with 42" fence railing on top—is an appropriate design of this required perimeter security element. GSA and ATF committed to maintaining the plant material located in front of this wall at a height at or near the top of the one-meter wall.
- The design of the perimeter wall and fence railing located at the property line on O Street will incorporate articulation (to break the continuous line of this element and add variety) and plantings in front of the wall similar to those proposed at the garden wall. The City understands that the location of these plants is in the public rights-of-way and outside of the ATF property line.
- The final designs of the garden wall, fence railing, and entry gates need further refinement. They will be excepted-out of the final approval of the project and staff recommends that the Commission delegate final approval of these elements to the Executive Director.

N Street

The revised design provides a 24' sidewalk incorporating street trees in planters and bollards that constitute the required vehicle perimeter security barrier. A 3' retaining wall and fence railing (42" in height) is located at the inside edge of the sidewalk, as part of the required pedestrian perimeter. In addition, the design incorporates a pergola and vegetation at the edge of the sidewalk to add to the public amenity of this streetscape.

- The revised N Street streetscape meets the Commission's requirement to provide the necessary security and pedestrian friendly environment.
- Design of the perimeter wall and fence railing located at the property line on N Street incorporates articulation (to break the continuous line of this element and add variety).
- The final design of the perimeter wall and fence railing requires further refinement and is excepted-out of final approval of the project and recommended for future submission for the Executive Director's review and approval.

2nd Street and the 2nd and N Street Corner

The Commission requested that GSA consult further with the DC SHPO regarding the retail portion of the project located in the 2nd Street right-of-way in order to confirm or revise the Section 106 agreements made for the concept design in August 2001. The DC SHPO has agreed subsequently that the retail portion can project into the 2nd Street right-of-way, as shown on the final site and building plans, and has provided written confirmation that the Section 106 review has been completed.

In addition, the Commission requested that GSA continue to work with DCOP to refine and/or reconsider the design of the vehicle entrance at the corner of 2nd and N Streets to make this area more pedestrian friendly and visually pleasant. GSA has submitted a design scheme that addresses these concerns:

- The corner's proposed design, which incorporates the diagonal driveway, is deemed as the best solution to the provision of drop-off and vehicular access to the underground parking garage.
- GSA and ATF have designated a "public zone" area where public amenities may be provided.
- Public art (sculpture), or something equally significant, is proposed as the major public amenity.
- Seating shall be incorporated into the design of this amenity.
- The three bays of wall (outside of the security support uses) on 2nd Street should not be blank, but should preferably be designed as public art. These walls could be distinguished through the use of relief, a change in materials, opaque glazing, artwork, etc.

The proposed headquarters building will potentially serve as a catalyst for the rejuvenation of the area and will help to establish the ultimate character of this redeveloping Washington neighborhood. The headquarters will occupy a dominant position on a major gateway into the city.

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve** the final site and building plans for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms headquarters **except** for the final design of the garden wall, fence railing, and entry gates; the “public zone” area at the intersection of 2nd and N Streets, including the major public amenity (sculpture); and the three bays of blank wall. Staff further recommends that the Commission delegate final approval of these elements to the Executive Director.

Staff commends GSA for working with NCPC and DCOP to resolve outstanding issues from NCPC’s preliminary approval. Staff is pleased with the manner in which GSA has provided a public amenity at the New York Avenue and O Street area to compensate for the limited pedestrian access on site. This park-like zone is an integral element which helps soften the wall. The redesign of the streetscape on the north side of N street incorporates planters and other street furniture, creating a pedestrian friendly environment. Staff finds that the refinement of the design of the vehicle entrance at the corner of 2nd and N Street makes this area more pedestrian friendly and visually pleasant. The diagonal driveway is the best solution for drop-off and underground access to the parking garage. GSA has also consulted with the DC SHPO and the outstanding Section 106 issue has been resolved for this project.

The design of this building satisfies ATF’s security needs while positively responding to the requirement of a 100-foot setback. The perimeter barrier satisfies the need for uncompromised security, while also providing physical and psychological security to ATF personnel.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on September 11, 2002 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the District Department of Housing and Community Development; the Fire Department; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

CONFORMANCE

National Historic Preservation Act

GSA has fully satisfied all requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. GSA’s consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) culminated in an August 30, 2001 letter from the DC SHPO to GSA concurring with GSA’s determination that the project would have no adverse effect on the L’Enfant Plan of the City of Washington.

The letter stated, “GSA has successfully avoided adverse effects on the city plan through commitment to a design concept that 1) avoids obstruction of the L’Enfant rights-of-way; 2) allows for the installation of public streets aligned with the adjacent city fabric; 3) includes

provision to create streets of adequate width [to avoid disruption of the functional use of the L'Enfant Plan streets] . . . Should GSA be unable to maintain this approach as the design progresses, it would of course be appropriate for GSA to reapply the criteria of effect under 36 CFR 800 and to consult further with this office.”

As shown on the final site and building plans, the proposed retail component is located within a portion of the former 2nd Street right-of-way (now incorporated in Lot 710). This is a change from the concept site plans used during the Section 106 review in the summer of 2001, which showed no structures within the rights-of-way.

GSA and the DC SHPO met on September 17, 2002 to confirm that the previous Section 106 agreements would satisfy the change in the location of the retail portion from the concept plan to the final site and building plans.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), GSA prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in July 2001 and completed a Record of Decision for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms National Headquarters on September 5, 2001.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

This project is included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program, Fiscal Years 2002 – 2007, adopted by the Commission on July 3, 2001.

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed site is located adjacent to New York and Florida Avenues, which are designated Special Streets in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Policies in this Element applicable to the protection and enhancement of Special Streets specify:

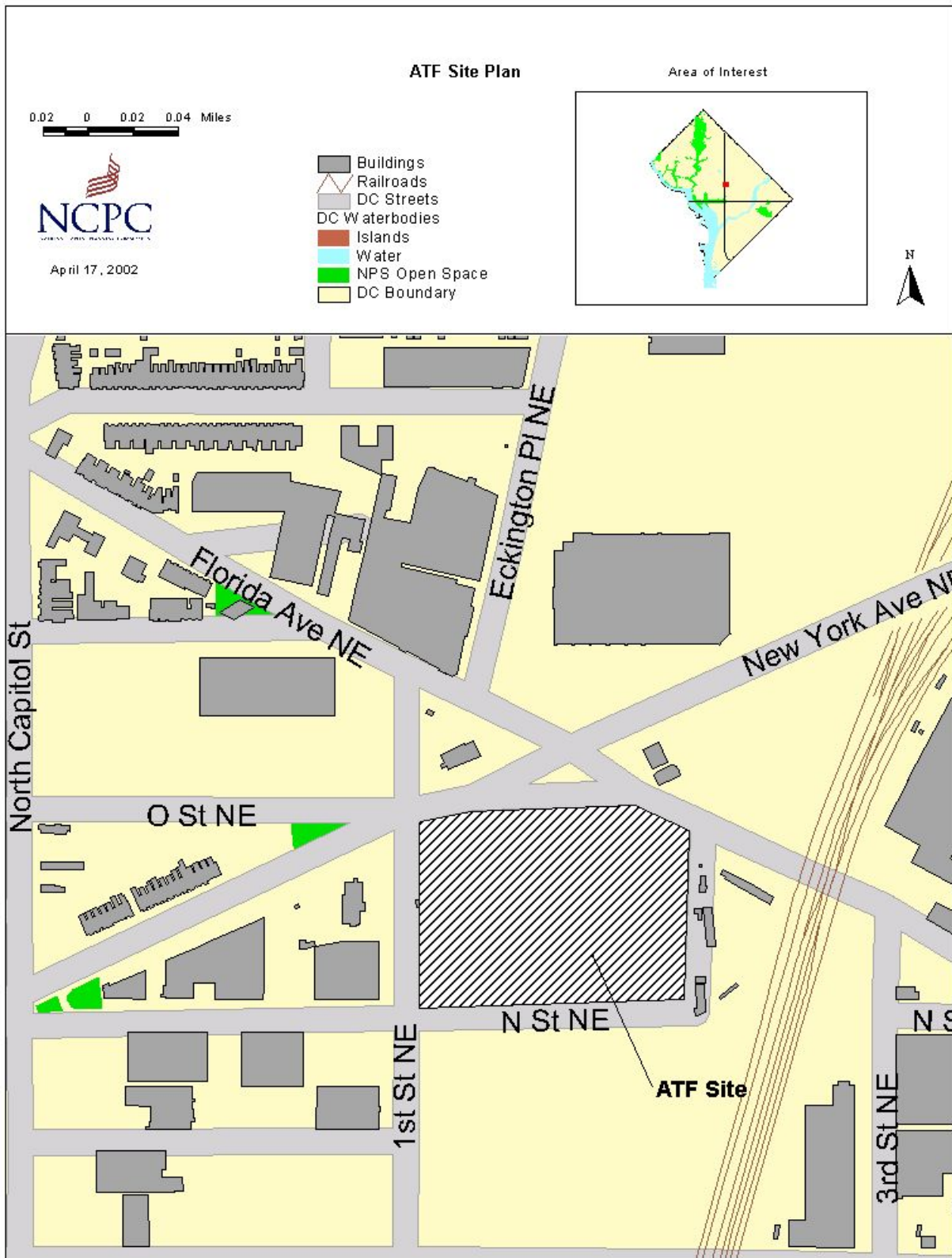
Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors.

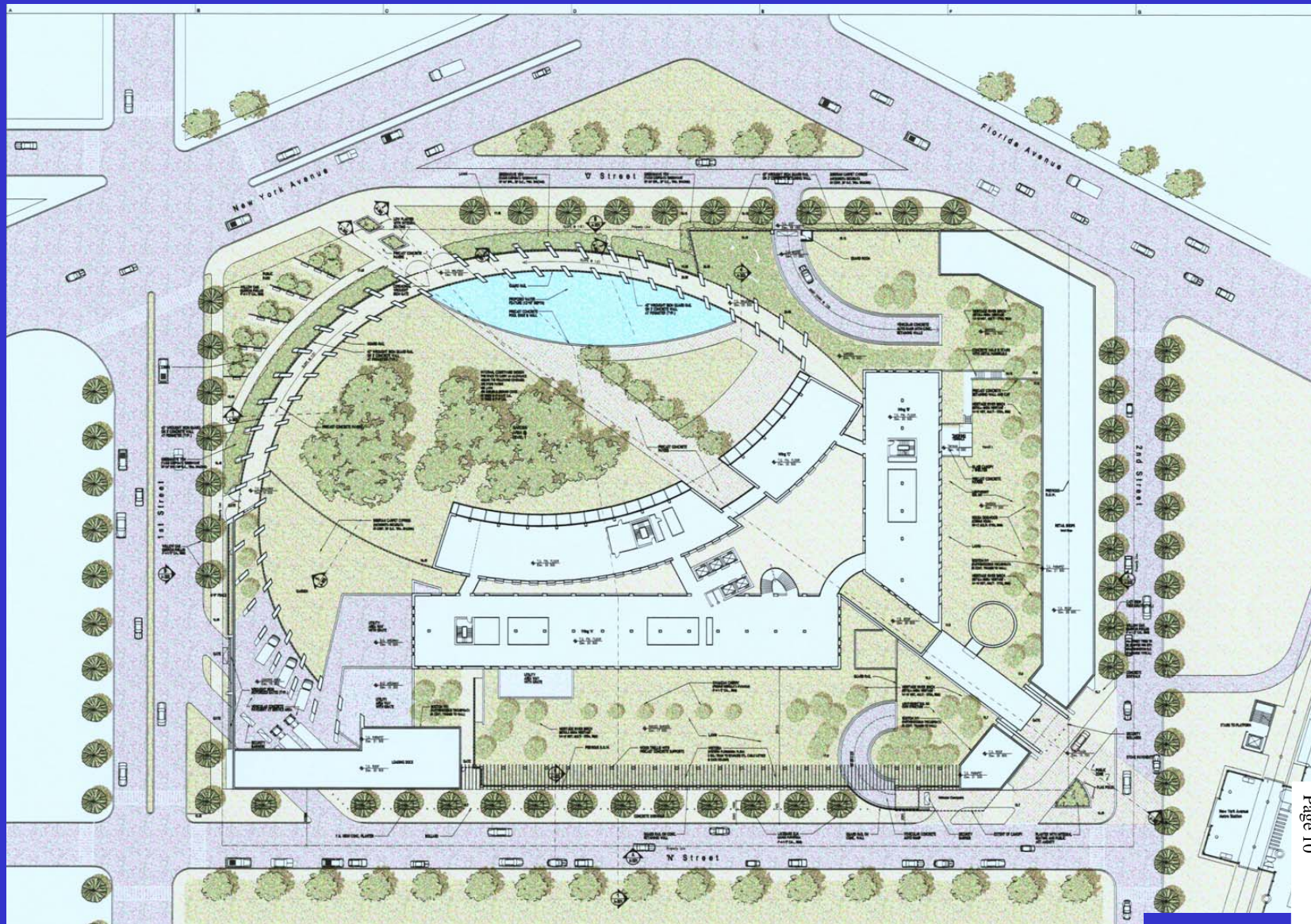
The existing street space and the buildings fronting on Special Streets and Places should be maintained, protected, and enhanced. Any repair, maintenance, improvement or new building should respect the historic elements, enhance the aesthetic qualities, and promote the amenity of this space.

The proposal is consistent with an applicable policy in the Federal Employment Element, which calls for the retention of federal employment in the District of Columbia. The policy states:

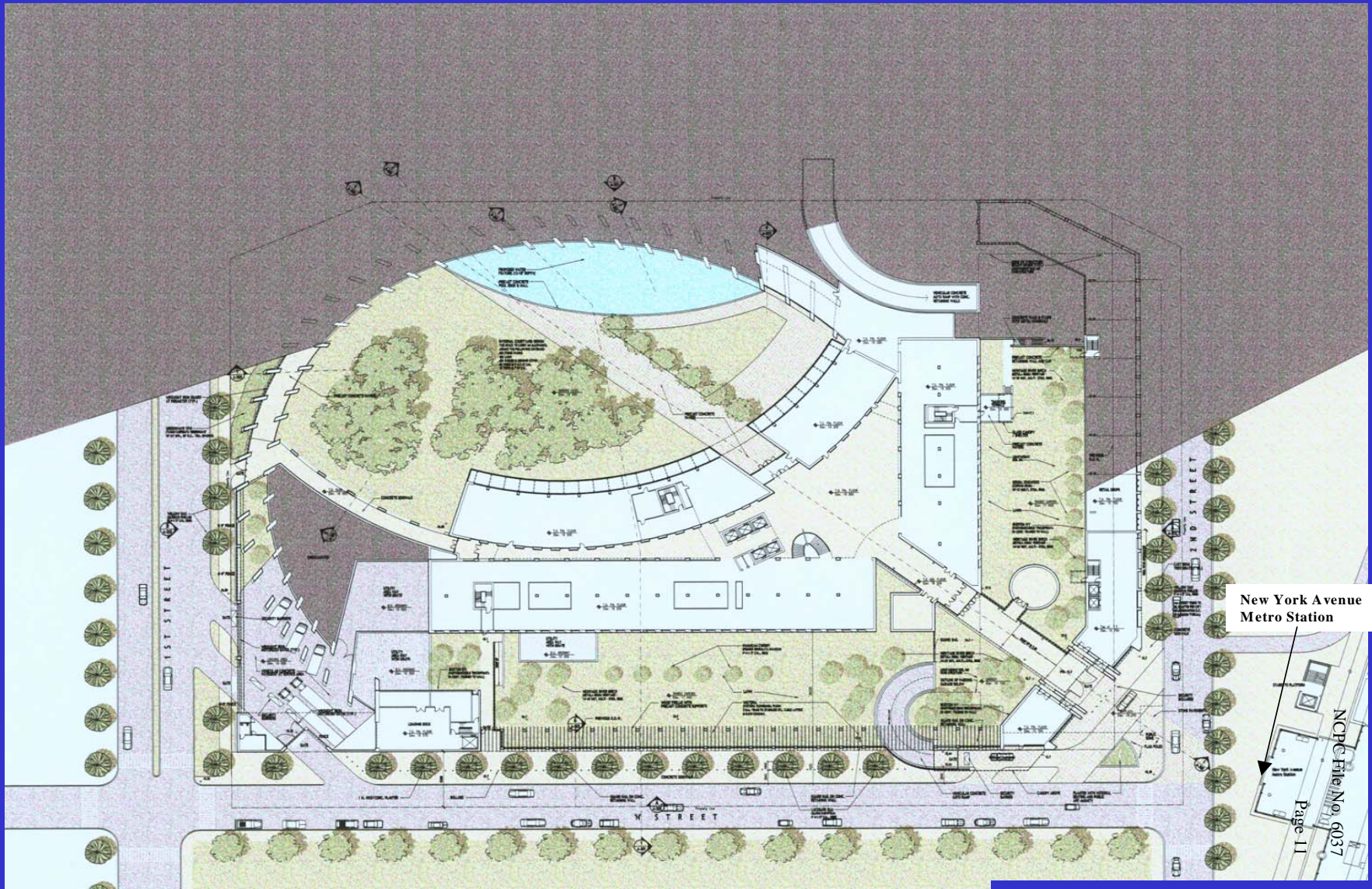
The historic relative distribution of Federal employment of approximately 60 percent in the District of Columbia, the established seat of national government, and 40 percent elsewhere in the Region should continue during the next two decades.

Employment at the site is expected to increase to 1,100 persons within 20 years. A total of 200 parking spaces are to be provided, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan employee-parking standard for the area, which is one employee parking space for every five employees.





Site Plan

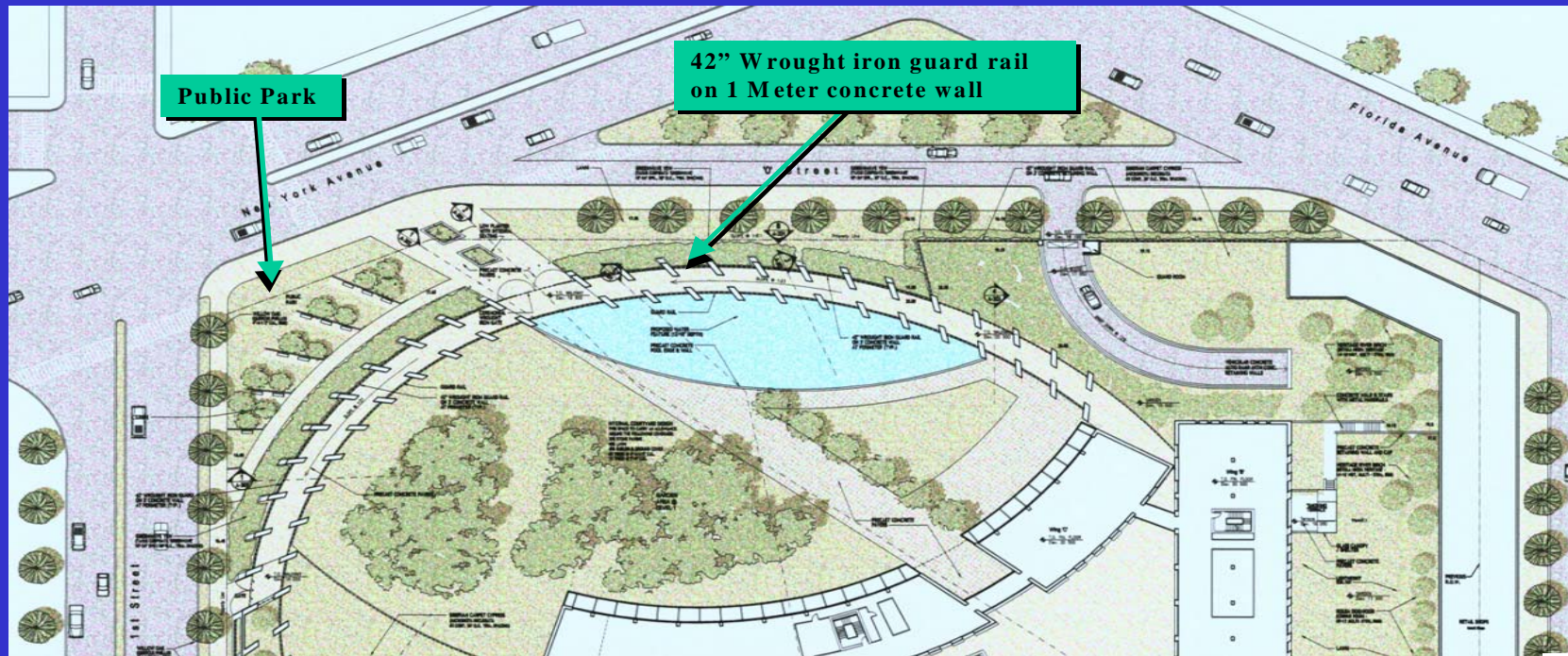


New York Avenue
Metro Station

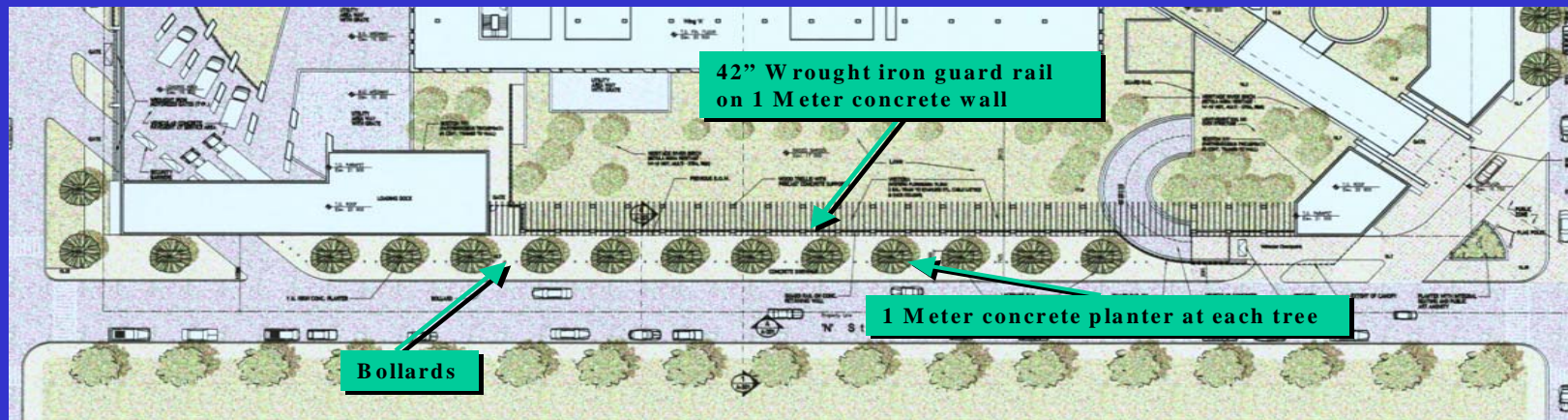
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Garden Level

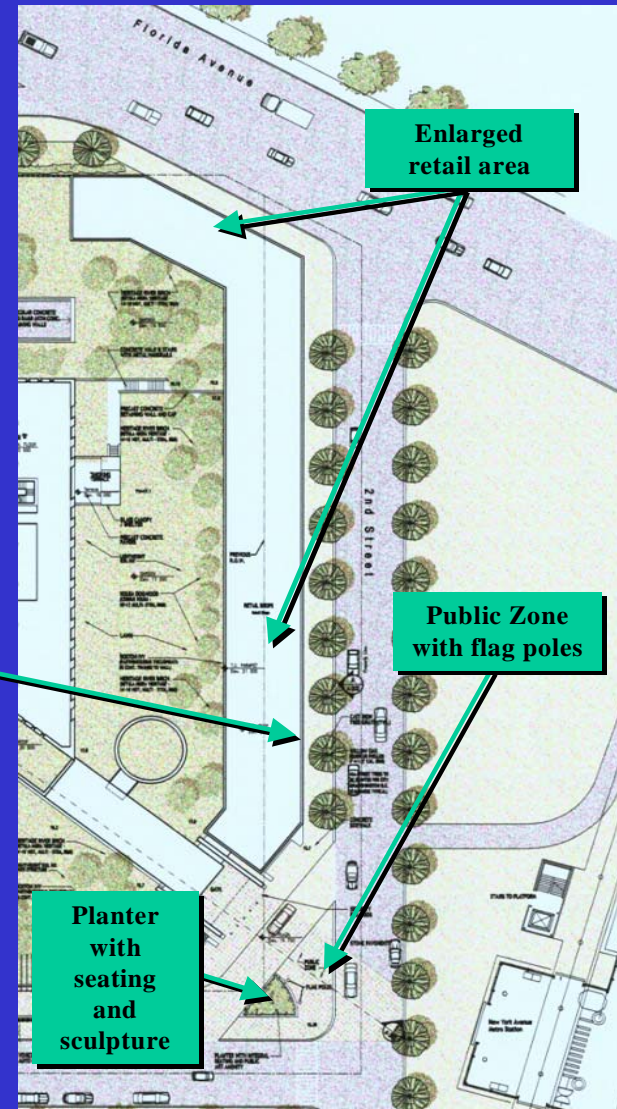
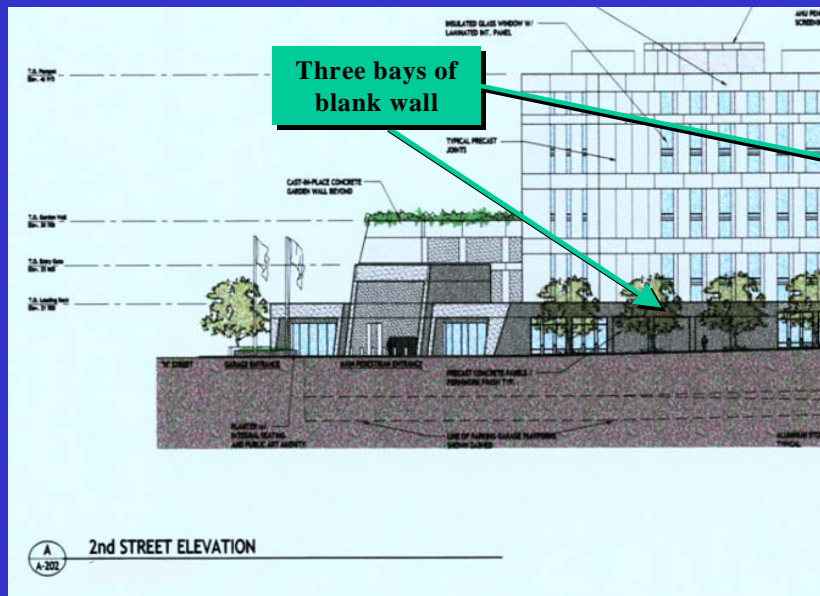
New York Avenue and O Street

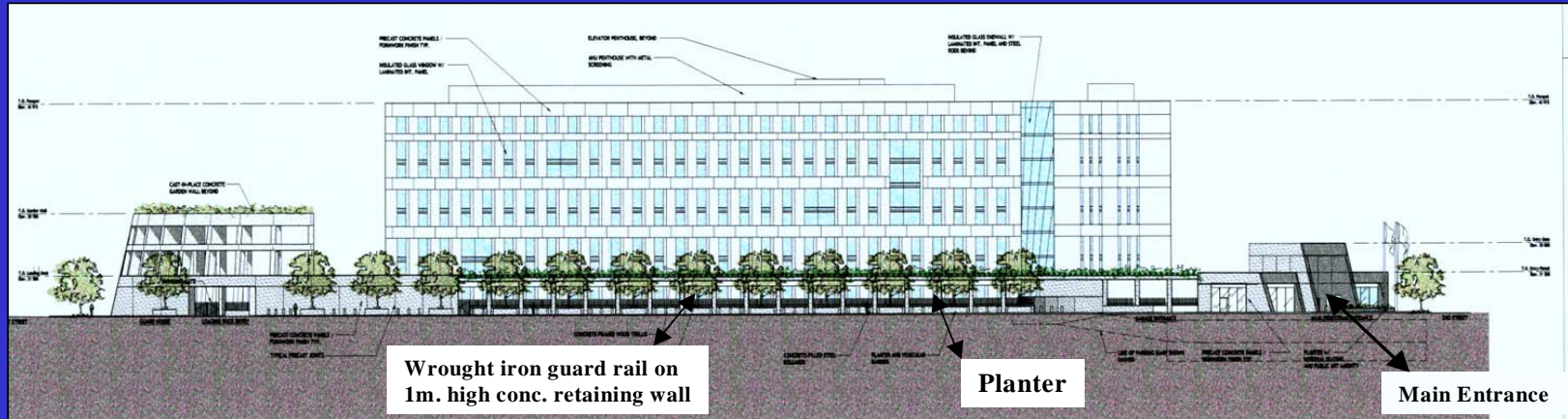


N Street

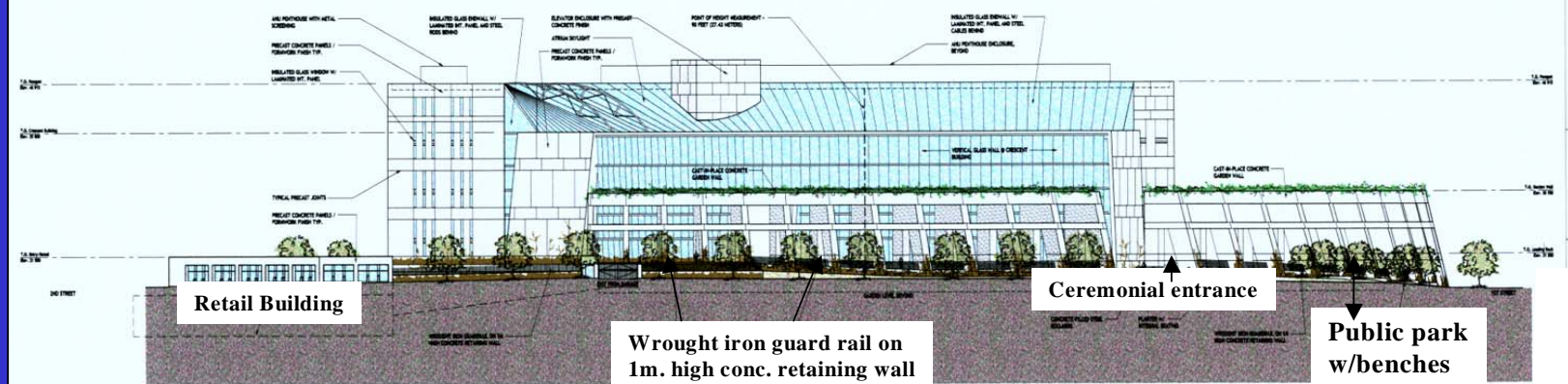


2nd Street and the 2nd and N Streets Corner

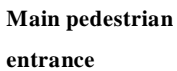




N Street Elevation



O Street Elevation



Retail